

CHAPTER 253

Chase

"Dammit Justin, why can't you take a punch?"

Maya panted heavily as she rushed down the hallways, trying to make her way back to the announcement room, where no doubt Shadow Labrys was already making advances on her mirror self and Rise. And maybe Chie if she woke up, but she might actually be able to put up a fight. After all, if Maya had to do it, she could too. There was nothing but pain shooting through her face right now. I mean, if you had your nose broken five times over in the span of one day, you would definitely be in a lot of pain. She just wanted to go home, put that thing on ice for... how long does it take for bones to heal? Couple of weeks? Crap... Looked like that meant a trip to the doctors... M-Maybe if she looked online she could find an alternative. Would probably be just as safe, even if it was coming from the largely inaccurate Yahoo Answers. Really anything was safer than a damn hospital.

Justin and Aigis had been left behind, since it seemed even though she tried to force him out in her stead, he couldn't get through the invisible barrier. God, you can imagine the rush of adrenaline that went through her heart as she realized her, with a broken nose and cuts and bruises, was going to have to fight a robot with a giant fucking axe with JETS on it. The one that took Chie out in one strike despite Chie being the strongest woman Maya knew. And she was definitely at liberty to claim that because Chie had smacked her a couple of times. Once when they first met, and a few times in what Maya could only presume was 'that time of the month.' Maya still couldn't really justify how that pissed her off that much that she was willing to punch people in the face. I mean, how do you think Maya felt? For like two years of her life she had one fucking pair of underwear, alright. If anyone had a right to be cranky that time of the month, it was her; and you didn't see her picking fights. But let's not delve into matters that are really none of your business, reader. The point was, Maya knew from experience Chie could hit hard even when she had no real reason to. Aiming to disabilitate, Chie probably could, even with her injuries. Maya could only pray she was up and fighting, because god knew she didn't want to.

But as I was saying, Justin and Aigis were a bit preoccupied, not only with being trapped in an invisible cage, but rather trying to fix the damages they had managed to cause with their little scuffle a moment or two ago. Justin, surprisingly enough, was able to fix the wiring he had managed to tear out of Aigis. You would think that a high-tech machine like hers would have thousands upon thousands of circuits, wires, bits, and pieces. But in fact, it seemed the main component to what made her move and breathe was a soul... Try finding that in a hardware store. Still, Justin always was a tech wiz, so it wasn't all too surprising he was able to connect the red

wire to the red wire and the blue wire to the blue wire... Though if Maya were Aegis, she'd have a more professional repair done when all of this was over. The very fact that her circuitry was exposed near her ankle in the first place meant she had sustained a little too much damage somewhere along the line. Probably when she encountered Justin's shadow.

And that left Maya... all alone to fend off the horrible killer robot that would be lurking in the next room. Why had god seemed to send her to certain death oh so often? I mean, I guess she survived the impossible on a fairly regular basis, so she couldn't really say she didn't deserve this shit. But at the same point... She didn't. All this stress was going to lead her to an early grave, swear to god. Assuming a heart attack didn't get her first, that is. Still, she was just a girl with little to no ambitions in life other than to live; and yet it seemed she couldn't even have that. She sighed as she heaved a bit, lungs feeling as they were going to collapse on themselves, using the walls beside her as support as she kept walking. She was out of breath, and what she saw as she rounded the corner only took the last of her breath away.

She wasn't sure whether to smile or back away with shame and horror as she noticed Yosuke furiously trying to get into the PA room. Seemed he had managed to find his way here at some point. Perhaps the invisible walls from earlier were starting to go down? If that was the case, why was Yosuke the only one here. It didn't matter how he got there in the end, she supposed. Only that he was there and he was fiddling around with the lock of the door using the top of his knife. Seemed he was trying to pick it, but alas, someone with no experience picking locks using a knife didn't exactly equate to an open door. "Dammit... come on..." He mumbled to himself before eventually giving up, throwing his knife to the ground in his anger... And in the process catching a glimpse of Maya out of the corner of his eye. He frowned a bit at first; after all she had ran away from him earlier with tears in her eyes... he wasn't sure what he had done to make her like that, but he hated it. Still, he was happy to see her, especially given the conditions, and eventually his pained frown gave way to a gentle, timid smile.

"H-hi." Maya waved timidly at Yosuke. She knew everything she had heard was nothing but an illusion, but at the end of the day it still hurt. The wound was still open and just seeing Yosuke seemed to tear an even wider gap in her flesh. At least it had, but then Yosuke flung his arms open and ran to her, embracing her and wrapping his arms around her body. Maya was caught off guard immediately, cheeks turning red with a combination of surprise and embarrassment. But then, she'd be lying if it wasn't some relief to see he really wasn't mad. If anything he felt bad, about what, well Maya would rather not think about it. All she knew was it was just so comfortable in his arms. Her arms were caught beneath his, so it was impossible for her to hug him back, so she was forced to do the next best thing and rest her head against his shoulder, taking just a moment to soak everything in. And

it was nice... Even when Yosuke pulled away and planted a quick peck on her nose. She immediately flinched in pain, much to his shock and confusion.

"Huh? A-Are you alright?"

"I think I broke it." Maya communicated, tears in her eyes and lip clenched between her teeth as she tried to pretend the pain wasn't there. How could something as sweet and splendorous as a kiss be so painful at the same time? And the amazing thing was that despite the pain that was shooting up the bridge of her nose right now... she couldn't entirely say she regretted it. Yosuke backed away with shame and horror. Two for two it would seem. He wasn't trying to hurt her today, but it seemed everything he did left her in tears.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to... Who did that to you?" Yosuke questioned, concern and anger in his voice. He got that the fights were necessary and that no one understood what each other were saying; he caught on to that very quickly. Still, that was no excuse to be hitting a girl so hard that she broke her nose... Especially when he realized Maya had never had any intention of fighting back today. Hell, she completely ran away from their encounter; no punches thrown or anything.

"Chie..." Maya sniffed carefully, trying to stop the mucus from running from her nose, but also being careful enough not to hurt her nose in the process. It didn't work. Yosuke's face immediately turned red with anger, eyebrows dropping down into a glare. Oh he was completely pissed off to find Chie of all people did it. For a couple reasons really; besides from Yu and Maya, Chie was probably one of his closest friends. Sure she kicked his ass a lot, but she usually had good reason. Not to mention she was the only friend he had when he first came here. And he knew Maya and Chie fought from time to time, but she never broke her goddamn nose. That was one of the bigger issues, but still not the only one. No, perhaps it would be more accurate to say he wasn't angry at Chie, but rather she was angry at the man behind the curtain. Because you just know the reason she had been getting increasingly aggressive was because she spent so much time with Justin. He was rubbing off on her in the worst way possible. Oh yes, let's just add that to the pile of firewood to the bonfire that was the rivalry between Justin and Yosuke.

"I'll have to talk to her about that later..." Yosuke sneered under her breath. He didn't really mean talk, he meant more like bitch out. And that was ultimately going to get him kicked in the balls again, he was sure. But it was the principal of the matter; and she didn't get to just walk around breaking people's noses without retribution. Maya sighed with a concern, eyebrows curved upwards as she looked up at Yosuke. She really didn't want there to be a storm brewing her. She's just put some bandages on it and... maybe hide away from the public eye forever out of embarrassment. God knows she wasn't going to go to the doctor just out of principal. "But for now..." Yosuke mumbled before crouching back down to the door to try and get this thing open. He could already hear what was going on in there,

and god knows it needed to stop. “I don’t suppose Justin taught you a thing about picking a lock, would he?”

Maya crossed her arms as she stared at the lock. He hadn’t, but that’s because she taught him. He was much better than her since he seemed to like to fiddle around with that stuff on his freetime. Still, Maya was poor, and while most everyone would attest to the fact that she was a good person, no one would argue she got into a lot of trouble trying to engineer the fun she could never really afford. Plus... well... You don’t live on the streets for a year off of thrown out McDonalds scraps. Look, she didn’t steal anything big, just a bag of chips or something here and there. Was that a crime, trying to feed herself? And to be honest, as afraid as she was to go to jail, it might have been for the best. At least then she’d have a bed and daily meals. I guess freedom was just a more valuable commodity. She sighed as she tried to wipe the awful shades of her past out of her mind. What was done was done; she couldn’t change it. She realized that. And still it bugged her.

“I do... but uh...”

“What’s up?”

“You realize that there’s a hole into this room on the other side, right?” Yosuke froze in place almost immediately. That would explain how he could hear everything so clearly.

“Oh... Well what are we doing still sitting here!”